A Crown of Autumn: A Thanksgiving Memoir

by Jonathan Olvera

Thanksgiving was approaching soon, and the scenery began to change. The lush green tones of spring and summer slowly surrendered, giving way to deeper shades of orange, amber, and crimson. The air, once heavy with heat, now carried a coolness—an autumn breath that swept across the fields and hillsides, whispering through the trees.

It was a new season, a new turning in the cycle of the sun and stars, a new covering for men, women, and children under the wide heavens. The green leaves, once so bright, turned orange and fell in patterns across the earth, dotting the landscape like patches of fire. The cool wind flew across the face of the burning sun, softening its rays and giving good weather to the inhabitants of America. This was good.

It was the season to count blessings—the labor of the land, the fruit gathered, the berries dried and stored, the grain waiting in barns, the fowl roaming in fields. Each harvest spoke of toil, sweat, and faith. Each meal prepared was the result of calloused hands and enduring hope.

I looked across the fields and thought to myself, *Oh, how great this is—the work we have set our hands and feet to. Our labor has not been in vain.*

Another nearby added, “To be grateful, yes, for the faithful workers and servants of the land, who labor so that all may share in companionship.”

The crowd murmured in agreement. Thanksgiving was more than a feast; it was a gathering of hearts in unity.

The day was coming, the day set aside to give thanks. Word spread across the land: a feast would be held, a gathering of men and women, children and elders, workers and preachers, craftsmen and salesmen, all meeting in a spirit of gratitude. It would be a time of roasted fowl and steaming pots, of fresh bread and the scent of herbs, of laughter echoing across the quarries and hilltops.

“Let us prepare!” I cried, filled with good cheer. “Let us brew our beer, roast our fowl, and gather our harvests! Let us forgive one another and return to our homes with praise on our lips and thanksgiving in our hearts!”

The moon itself seemed eager, waiting for the sun to set so preparations could begin. On the hillsides, mothers and children worked side by side, gathering herbs, pressing apples, laying linens across long tables. The men returned from the quarries and fields, setting down their burdens, washing the dust from their hands, and lending strength to the building of fires and roasting of meats.

It was magical—this harmony between labor and nature, between toil and joy. The sun, low in the sky, seemed to cherish the moment, glowing warmly as if it too prepared for the feast. The whole world felt festive, as though autumn itself had laid out a tablecloth of gold and orange leaves, spread across the land in honor of the day.

Thanksgiving was not only a feast of food but a feast of memory. We gave thanks for teachers, who guided our children in wisdom. We gave thanks for waters, rivers that carried blessings, streams that quenched our thirst. We gave thanks for ships that set sail on good journeys, carrying goods and hope to faraway shores. We gave thanks for family, for neighbors, for strangers who became friends at the table.

As the day drew near, lanterns were lit, and music filled the air. Fiddles played, drums kept rhythm, voices lifted in song. Tables were set with roasted turkeys, steaming bowls of potatoes, cranberry sauces gleaming like jewels, bread baked golden and fragrant. There were pies—apple, pumpkin, pecan—lined like treasures, waiting to be enjoyed. Children ran about in laughter, cheeks red from the chill. Elders told stories of seasons past, of harvests gained and hardships overcome.

And then came the prayer. All grew still as heads bowed. “Thank God,” a voice said. “Praise the Lord. Give us many more seasons of harvest and health. Grant us peace in our homes, forgiveness in our hearts, and joy in our labor.”

A chorus of “Amen” followed. And then the feast began.

That day, I looked around the table and thought of what Thanksgiving had always meant to me. It meant remembering the peace and joy I had shared with family and friends. It meant recalling visitors welcomed, pets cherished, and nights filled with laughter and warmth. It meant acknowledging the labor of those who worked in season, those who tilled, sowed, and reaped so that food might bless our tables. It meant forgiving trespasses, settling debts, and beginning anew.

Thanksgiving was not just a holiday. It was a covenant between people and land, between man and God. It was the sacred rhythm of sowing and reaping, of working and resting, of praising and remembering.

And so I give thanks—for the harvest, for the labor, for the fellowship, and for the memories that will remain with me for many years.

That is Thanksgiving. That is what it has always been. And as long as the leaves turn orange and the winds blow cool across the sun, as long as the table is spread and prayers are lifted, Thanksgiving will remain.

For it is not only a feast of food, but a feast of spirit. A festival of gratitude, dressed in autumn colors, glowing like fire against the chill.

Thanksgiving is the crown of autumn, and I wear it gladly.